Dogs

230 The Tahltan claim to have had dogs from the earliest times and their origin is lost in antiquity. It is thought that they originated from wolves (i.e., the timber wolf of the North) and have been tamed by Indians. Probably the first were litters of pups captured by the Indians and raised in captivity. The best gentle of these were preserved for breeding and in process of time through selection and constant contact with man the Indian dog was evolved. The Indians especially often bred dogs with male wolves and do so yet to improve the strain. Attempts to breed them with the fox have always failed. The Tahltans considered all their dogs to be of one breed or descent, although they varied considerably in size and colour. All had the same shape of face, nose, ears, and tail and the same quality of hair, in these respects resembling wolves. In size there was a large kind, the largest of them somewhat smaller than the timber wolf, and a small variety, the smallest of them no larger than terriers. A number of dogs were of medium size resulting at least in some cases from crossing between the large and small kinds, or the small variety may itself have been evolved through selection and breeding of the smaller of the middle-sized dogs who themselves were probably simply individual variants of the common large dog. Some Indians paid attention to the breeding of dogs for certain hunting qualities. For instance two dogs known to be specially good for beaver would be mated; thus certain families or strains of dogs possessed more pronounced qualities than others for the hunting of certain kinds of game. This was hereditary in them and no doubt developed through breeding. Certain dogs, say, that did not belong to a strain peculiarly efficient for beaver hunting through training and frequent use became as good or almost as good as those possessing the strain. On the other hand many who did not belong to this particular strain never became any good at beaver hunting. Dogs were also sometimes bred for size and color but this was more to suit individual tastes or fancies of men, women and children. Some women and children liked small dogs
231 and dogs of peculiar or pronounced colors. Most dogs, especially the larger ones, resembled wolves in their general colors and markings. Like them they were all more or less white underneath and of different shades of grey, brown and black above. Some were very light grey or almost pure white and others almost pure black. Some were reddish and some spotted. Most of them, however, were intermediate grey and brown colors.